



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

December 6, 2002

OFFICE OF
ENFORCEMENT AND
COMPLIANCE ASSURANCE

SPEECH

SUBJECT: National Environmental Justice Advisory Committee (NEJAC)
FROM: John Peter Suarez
TO: Baltimore, MD

-IT IS GOOD TO BE HERE. THANK YOU

-FIRST, I WANT TO START BY THANKING ALL OF YOU , THE MEMBERS OF
NEJAC FOR YOUR MANY CONTRIBUTIONS.

-THE FACT THAT YOU TAKE THE TIME OUT OF YOUR BUSY SCHEDULES TO
SERVE ON THE NEJAC, PROVES YOUR PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO THIS ISSUE
AND YOUR APPRECIATION FOR THE IMPORTANT ROLE THAT EPA PLAYS. I
JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU KNOW WE RECOGNIZE AND GREATLY
APPRECIATE THAT.

-WE APPRECIATE YOUR PRO-ACTIVE ATTITUDE IN PARTNERING WITH EPA TO

ENSURE THAT THERE IS A CLEAN AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL PEOPLE.

-AS AN AGENCY, WE ARE INDEBTED TO NEJAC FOR ALL THE INDEPENDENT, SOUND AND TIMELY ADVICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM YOU ON INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN ALL POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES.

-WHETHER IT HAS BEEN PERMITTING, COMMUNITY-BASED HEALTH RESEARCH, INTERAGENCY COORDINATION, FISH CONSUMPTION, AND NOW, POLLUTION PREVENTION. IN A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT AREAS YOU HAVE PROVIDED WELCOME ADVICE AND VALUABLE RECOMMENDATIONS. WE ALSO LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING ABOUT THE NEJAC'S NEXT FOCUS AREA, CUMULATIVE RISK.

-SO AGAIN, LET ME REITERATE MY THANKS FOR YOUR MANY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE AGENCY, AND ULTIMATELY TO THE PROTECTION OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL PEOPLE.

10TH ANNIVERSARY

-AS YOU ALL KNOW, WE HAVE JUST RECENTLY CELEBRATED THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE. SO WE ARE VERY PROUD OF HOW FAR WE HAVE COME AS AN OFFICE. YET, AS WAS

REFLECTED IN THE CELEBRATION'S SLOGAN, NO ONE IS RESTING ON THEIR LAURELS. INSTEAD, WE ARE "MOVING FORWARD" AND LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE, WHERE IT IS OUR GOAL TO SEE "ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOR ALL".

PRIORITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

-AS YOU ARE AWARE, OUR OFFICE OF ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE ASSURANCE, IS COMMITTED TO PROTECTING HUMAN HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH ENFORCEMENT OF ALL APPLICABLE ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS.....

..... BUT LET ME ADD, THAT I BELIEVE THAT THIS PROTECTION IS ONLY GOING TO BE COMPLETE WHEN WE HAVE FULLY WEAVED ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INTO THE VERY FABRIC OF EVERY, PROGRAM, POLICY, AND ACTIVITY THAT IS CARRIED OUT IN OUR OFFICE..

-THIS IS A KEY PRIORITY THAT SPANS EVERY DEPARTMENT OF OECA. THERE ARE MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN OECA'S DAY TO DAY OPERATIONS.

-I JUST WANT TO TAKE A FEW MOMENTS THIS AFTERNOON TO PRESENT TO YOU THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORK THAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED IN THE

OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, THE WORK THAT IS CONTINUING TO BE CARRIED OUT AND WILL ENDURE INTO THE FUTURE TO ENSURE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE ALL PEOPLE ARE SAFER AND BETTER PROTECTED.

IMPLEMENTATION

-FOR US IN OECA, IT STARTS BY FACTORING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INTO THE FRONT END OF OUR PLANNING AND BUDGETING PROCESSES, INCLUDING MEMORANDA OF AGREEMENTS BETWEEN EPA HEADQUARTERS AND EPA REGIONAL OFFICES.

-AS OUR PARTNERS IN THE ENFORCEMENT OF FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS, IT IS CRITICAL THAT WE COMMUNICATE TO BOTH STATES AND TRIBES OUR COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND REFLECT THAT IN OUR COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS AND GRANTS.

-OECA ALSO HAS THE LEAD IN ENFORCEMENT PRIORITY SETTING, CASE SELECTION, AND TERMS SOUGHT IN SETTLEMENTS, WHICH ALL PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO INCORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE ENFORCEMENT PROCESS.

RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

-HOWEVER, IT WOULDN'T BE ENOUGH TO STOP THERE. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ISN'T JUST IN THE PLANNING PROCESS, BUT WE ARE ABLE TO MAKE

AN IMMEDIATE IMPACT IN EJ COMMUNITIES THROUGH OECA'S
SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS.

-THE SEPS POLICY NOW SPECIFICALLY EMPHASIZES CONSIDERATION OF
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ISSUES IN THE SETTLEMENT OF AN ENFORCEMENT
ACTION. THESE PROJECTS RESULT IN DIRECT AND IMMEDIATE
ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES.

-ALSO, ORE IS NOW PILOTING EFFORTS, WHERE POSSIBLE, TO MAKE SURE
INJUNCTIVE RELIEF OCCURS FIRST AT THOSE FACILITIES LOCATED IN
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES.

-THESE EFFORTS GO A LONG WAY TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES
MOST ADVERSELY AND DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED BY
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS.

STRATEGIC

-OUR ADMINISTRATOR CONTINUES TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR
APPROACHES TO PROTECTION OF HUMAN HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT
TO BE STRATEGIC.

-IN REGARDS TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, I BELIEVE WE ARE ABLE TO BE
BOTH STRATEGIC AND SMART THROUGH OUR USE OF DATA. WE ARE ABLE

TO IDENTIFY THESE COMMUNITIES WHO ARE AT A HIGH ENVIRONMENTAL RISK THROUGH THE USE OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS.

- OECA'S SMART ENFORCEMENT TARGETING AND COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE WILL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT NONCOMPLIANCE IN EJ COMMUNITIES AND IN TURN DIRECT PROGRAMMATIC RESOURCES ACCORDINGLY.

-OUR CRIMINAL ENFORCEMENT DIVISION IS DOING A GOOD JOB OF THIS:

(ex.) AFTER IDENTIFYING AREAS IN WHICH INSTANCES OF HARM OR POTENTIAL HARM HAVE TAKEN PLACE, OECA'S CRIMINAL ENFORCEMENT TARGETING EFFORT FACTORS IN EJ BY OVERLAYING RECENT CENSUS DATA TO FURTHER IDENTIFY IF THESE AREAS ARE LOCATED IN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES.

-TO BE SMART, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE CONTINUE TO TAP THE VAST RESOURCE OF DATA THAT IS AVAILABLE TO US.

CHALLENGE

-HOWEVER, WITH ALL OF THE GREAT STRIDES THAT ARE BEING MADE TO REDUCE THE RISK OF ENVIRONMENTAL HARM IN EJ COMMUNITIES, THERE STILL REMAINS THE CHALLENGE FOR US OF SHOWCASING THESE EFFORTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

-A MAJOR GOAL FOR OECA IS TO CAPTURE THE NATIONWIDE

ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS OF EPA'S ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS ACCURATELY AND ADEQUATELY.

-INCORPORATED INTO THAT MISSION, WE WANT TO BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE EJ SUCCESSES EFFECTIVELY TO THE PUBLIC AND, ESPECIALLY, TO EJ COMMUNITIES.

- PEOPLE IN OUR AGENCY ARE DOING GOOD WORK WHICH IS BRINGING ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS AND PROTECTING YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE IN EJ COMMUNITIES, THIS STORY NEEDS TO BE TOLD. IT RIGHTFULLY BOOSTS PEOPLE'S TRUST IN THE EPA AND THE CREDIBILITY OF THE WORK WE ARE DOING WITHIN THESE COMMUNITIES.

STILL DO MORE-LEARNING

-ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IS BEING INCORPORATED ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF ALL THAT WE ARE DOING IN OECA. YET, BECAUSE THIS IS A RELATIVELY NEWER INITIATIVE, I'LL BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT, WE ARE STILL LEARNING.

-I BELIEVE THAT ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO FULLY INTEGRATE EJ INTO ITS PROGRAMS AND POLICIES IS TO PROVIDE EJ TRAINING TO OECA EMPLOYEES AND OUR STATE AND TRIBAL PARTNERS.

-WE CONTINUE TO REVIEW OUR OUTREACH STRATEGIES TO BE SURE THAT THEY ARE ENCOMPASSING EJ COMMUNITIES.

-FOR EXAMPLE, WE HAVE ASKED FOR YOU TO HELP US, TO PROVIDE ADVICE ON HOW EPA CAN IMPROVE THE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY OF OUR COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE TOOLS.

-OECA WILL USE INTEGRATED STRATEGIES INCLUDING COMPLIANCE MONITORING, COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE, ENFORCEMENT AND INCENTIVES TO MORE EFFECTIVELY PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH IN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES.

CONCLUSION

-AS I CLOSE, I WANT TO STRESS THAT THIS IS SUCH AN IMPORTANT PRIORITY IN OUR OFFICE, THAT, NOT ONLY ARE WE FACTORING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INTO EVERY POLICY AND PROGRAM. BUT IN THE PROCESS, WE ARE ALSO UTILIZING EVERY AVAILABLE TOOL IN EVERY SINGLE DEPARTMENT TO ACHIEVE OUR GOAL OF “ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOR ALL”, BOTH NOW, AND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. IT CAN’T BE SAID ENOUGH, HOW MUCH WE APPRECIATE YOUR PARTNERSHIP WITH US IN THE ATTAINMENT OF THIS NECESSARY GOAL!

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